

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - August 21 , 2012

Attendance:

Paul Chestnut, Laura Chiu, Terry Atkinson, George Chippendale, Ruth Chippendale, Claire Collins, Susan Adams

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

OLD BUSINESS

2. Approval of June minutes

The minutes were approved.

3. Our Congolese Refugees

We are no longer visiting the family on a regular basis, except for Kamal, who tutors Chantal. Laura had visited recently to bring diapers and to go shopping with them for clothes for school. Claire Collins from Catholic Charities came to tell us what CC is doing for refugees. She said that there are more refugees coming. There are several former translators from Iraq. We said that we would welcome working with another refugee; we would prefer a single person, and one who lives closer to Palo Alto.

Claire said that CC has recently lost grants and has a budget problem. She described a plan to raise money through car donations. They are trying to get an average of one car donation per parish. One car is worth an average of \$500. We said that we were willing to try, but our parish St. Vincent dePaul group has a drive to get car donations also. Laura will Call Roberta Uebbing about SVdP's efforts in this area.

Susan Adams came to discuss her recent visit to help refugees with their paper work. They need to fill out forms to get food stamps and other things. She also introduced them to EDJOIN, an online job search web site for public education.

4. Death Penalty issues - SAFE initiative

A campaign for Proposition 34, the SAFE Initiative, is underway, spearheaded by California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty. The parish has officially endorsed the initiative. Two events to get publicity and to raise money have been held: one on August 6 at Channing House and another on August 19 at SAG.

5. Torture Awareness - Results of signature drive on August 12.

On August 11 and 12, there was an insert to the bulletin that described a campaign by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) to oppose solitary confinement in our prisons. On the reverse side of the insert, there was a statement that we asked our parishioners to sign. Paul reported that we collected 50 signatures to send to NRCAT. They will send this statement along with the list of the endorsers, to that California's governor and top corrections official, along with every member of that state's legislature. The number of signed statements that we gathered is disappointing. The publicity for the event was poor, and the number of helpers to collect signatures

was insufficient.

6. Soles4Souls status

Soles4Souls® is a shoe charity that collects gently worn shoes and monies to provide shoes to those in need. A drive to collect shoes is scheduled for September 23 and 23. Terry Atkinson is spearheading the effort. At least two people are needed at each Mass to collect shoes. Laura has passed around a sign-up list for volunteers. Details of the campaign were discussed.

7. November Ballot Issues - League of Women Voters presentation

The League of Women Voters will make a presentation on October 9 as part of the Spirituality Tuesday events. Laura will send a summary statement to Bev Wade. They will discuss all of the ballot issues.

8. Human Trafficking - The CASE Initiative (Prop 35)

We support a ballot measure -- Proposition 35, Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act -- which will both increase criminal penalties for human trafficking and direct fines to enhanced victim services and law enforcement. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have made a strong statement about human trafficking at their web site: <http://usccb.org/about/human-trafficking/>. Information about the group Californians Against Slavery, the sponsor of the initiative, is contained here: <http://californiaagainstsavery.org/>.

NEW BUSINESS

10. Labor Day Editorial

Fr. Matt had requested us to write the editorial for the September 2 bulletin on the topic of Labor Day. Paul wrote a draft and passed around copies. Everyone agreed that it was good, but that it must be made much shorter. Paul agreed to do that.

11. What's On Your Mind?

12. Volunteer for Faith-sharing/Question of the Week

Next meeting - September 18, 2012. This is a Wednesday. We decided to hold the meeting after SOUP (Sharing Ourselves with Undernourished People), in hopes that we might attract some new members to stay for the meeting.